

EXTENDED CARE LINK

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National **disaster** Preparedness Month

Is your facility prepared for a disaster? September is National Preparedness Month and according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), it is a time to encourage and remind everyone to be prepared for disasters and emergencies.¹ Disasters can occur for a variety of reasons both man-made and natural. Understanding how to prepare for disasters and educating others reduces risks to health and the environment.²

In April, The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation released its National Health Security Preparedness Index. This Index "...measures the nation's day-to-day readiness for addressing a health emergency."³ The U.S. scored 7.1 on a scale of 10, an improvement from last year. Viral videos of nursing home residents sitting in water during Hurricane Harvey demonstrated that LTC still has room for improvement.



Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
Relief workers sort through donated medical supplies.

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid (CMS) published the Emergency Preparedness Requirements for Providers in the Federal Register in 2016 with compliance required by November 15, 2017. The long-term care facility rules are located at §483.73. The purpose of the rules were "...to establish national emergency preparedness requirements to ensure adequate planning for both natural and man-made disasters, and coordination with federal, state, tribal, regional, and local emergency preparedness systems."⁴

There are four core elements identified within the rule:



The first element requires facilities to develop an emergency plan that will need to be reviewed and updated annually. Your plan should be based upon the facilities risk assessment, and should include strategies for emergency events identified within that plan, address your specific resident population and include a process for cooperation and collaboration with local, tribal, regional, State or Federal emergency preparedness officials.⁵

Policies and procedures should include,

- How the needs of the staff and residents will be met, to include;
 - ◆ Food, water, medical, and pharmaceutical supplies
 - ◆ Alternate sources of energy to maintain environmental temperature and temperatures for the safe and sanitary storage of provisions
 - ◆ Emergency lighting
 - ◆ Fire detection, extinguishing, and alarm systems; and
 - ◆ Sewage and waste disposal
- A system to track the location of staff and residents during the emergency
- A means to shelter in place
- Plan for safely evacuating the facility
- How the facility will communicate with external resource for help
- A system of medical documentation that will protect the confidentiality of the residents
- The use of volunteers or other emergency staffing strategies
- Arrangements with other LTC facilities and providers to receive residents if necessary⁶



A communication plan is also imperative. According to the rules, the plan will need to include various contact names and numbers along with a primary and alternate method of communicating with staff, the State Licensing and Certification Agency, the State LTC Ombudsman, and emergency management agencies.⁷ The plan should describe how you would share information and medical records including the general condition and location of residents to maintain continuity of care, in the event of an evacuation and with resident representatives in a way that will protect confidentiality.⁸



Training and testing is the last required component.⁹ This includes educating staff, volunteers, and those individuals providing services under arrangement about the emergency preparedness policies and procedures annually. The education will need to be documented to include the method used to demonstrate staff knowledge. You will need to conduct drills and participate in full-scale community-based or facility based full-scale exercise. Be sure that you maintain generator fuel and that you inspect and test the emergency generator according to Life Safety and other applicable codes⁷.

CMS has made available an Emergency Planning Checklist for LTC residents, family members, friends, personal caregivers and guardians. This checklist is also helpful for LTC facilities to prepare to answer questions that might be posed by residents or their caregivers. Also available is a copy of the Ombudsman LTC Resident Evacuation Assessment Checklist. These checklists can be accessed at https://www.cms.gov/Medicare/Provider-Enrollment-and-Certification/SurveyCertEmergPrep/Downloads/SandC_EPChecklist_Persons_LTCFacilities_Ombudsmen.pdf

Another resource is the TRACIE- Healthcare Emergency Preparedness Information Gateway.



This website contains education and training resources, templates, and toolkits and can be accessed at <https://asprtracie.hhs.gov/technical-resources/52/long-term-care-facilities/47>

There have been several natural disasters in the past few years. In each of these events, there have been cases where emergency plans either

Conclusion



were not available or did not work. In an effort to improve response and protect the health and safety of others, National Preparedness Month is a way to remind people to review and familiarize themselves with their emergency plans. Your best defense in a disaster or emergency is planning, training and practicing.

For a copy of the 81 FR 63859 **Medicare and Medicaid Programs: Emergency Preparedness Requirements for Medicare and Medicaid Participating Providers and Suppliers** go to <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2016/09/16/2016-21404/medicare-and-medicaid-programs-emergency-preparedness-requirements-for-medicare-and-medicaid>

¹ EPA- September is Preparedness Month. <https://www.epa.gov/natural-disasters/september-preparedness-month>

² Indem

³ McKnight's- Experts cite LTC's better disaster preparedness scores but say more needed. <https://www.mcknights.com/news/experts-cite-ltcs-better-disaster-preparedness-scores-but-say-more-needed/article/760608/>

⁴ Emergency Preparedness Rule <https://www.cms.gov/Medicare/Provider-Enrollment-and-Certification/SurveyCertEmergPrep/Emergency-Prep-Rule.html>

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